Clovis I

(c. 509 – 27 November 511)

BRIEFING

Clovis (Latin: *Chlodovechus*; reconstructed Frankish: **Hlōdowig*; c. 466 – 27 November 511) was the first king of the Franks to unite all of the Franks under one ruler, changing the form of leadership from a group of petty kings to rule by a single king, and ensuring that the kingship was passed down to his heirs. He is considered to have been the founder of the Merovingian dynasty, which ruled the Frankish kingdom for the next two centuries. Clovis is important in the historiography of France as "the first king of what would become France."

Clovis succeeded his father, Childeric I, as a king of the Salian Franks in 481, and eventually came to rule an area extending from what is now the southern Netherlands to northern France, corresponding in Roman terms to Gallia Belgica (northern Gaul). At the Battle of Soissons (486), he established his military dominance of the rump state of the fragmenting Western Roman Empire, which was then under the command of Syagrius. By the time of his death in 511, Clovis had conquered several smaller Frankish kingdoms in the northeast of Gaul, stretching into what is now Germany. Clovis also conquered the Alemanni in eastern Gaul and the Visigothic kingdom of Aquitania in the southwest. These campaigns added significantly to Clovis's domains and established his dynasty as a major political and military presence in western Europe.

Clovis is also significant because of his baptism in 508, largely at the behest of his wife, Clotilde, who would later be venerated as a saint for this act, celebrated today in both the Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church. The adoption by Clovis of Catholicism (as opposed to the Arianism of most other Germanic tribes) led to widespread conversion among the Franks, and eventually to religious unification across what is now modern-day France, the Low Countries and Germany. The alliance between the Franks and Catholicism eventually led to Charlemagne's crowning by the Pope as emperor in 800, and to the subsequent birth of the early Holy Roman Empire in the middle of the 10th century.

NAME

Based on the attested forms, the original name is reconstructed in the Frankish language as **Hlōdowik* or **Hlōdowig* and is traditionally considered to be composed of two elements, deriving from both Proto-Germanic: **hlūdaz* ("loud, famous") and **wiganą* ("to battle, to fight"), resulting in the traditional practice of translating Clovis' name as meaning "famous warrior" or "renowned in battle".

However, scholars have pointed out that Gregory of Tours consistently transcribes the names of various Merovingian royal names containing the first element as *chlodo-*. The use of a close-mid back rounded vowel (o), rather than the expected close back rounded vowel (u) that Gregory does use in various other Germanic names (i.e. Fredegundis, Arnulfus, Gundobadus, etc.) opens up the possibility that the first element instead derives from Proto-Germanic **hlutą* ("lot, share, portion"), giving the meaning of the name as "loot bringer" or "plunder (bringing) warrior". This hypothesis is supported by the fact that if the first element is taken to mean "famous", then the name of Chlodomer (one of Clovis' sons) would contain two elements (**hlūdaz* and **mērijaz*) both meaning "famous", which would be highly uncommon within the typical Germanic name structure.

In Middle Dutch, a language closely related to Frankish, the name was rendered as *Lodewijch* (cf. modern Dutch *Lodewijk*).[The name is found in other West Germanic languages, with cognates including Old English *Hloðwig*, Old Saxon *Hluduco*, and Old High German *Hludwīg* (variant *Hluotwīg*).[6] The latter turned into *Ludwig* in Modern German, although the king Clovis himself is generally named Chlodwig. The Old Norse form *Hlǫðvér* was most likely borrowed from a West Germanic language.

The Frankish name **Hlodowig* is at the origin of the French given name *Louis* (variant *Ludovic*), borne by 18 kings of France, via the Latinized form *Hludovicus* (variants *Ludhovicus, Lodhuvicus*, or *Chlodovicus*). The English *Lewis* stems from the Anglo-French *Louis*.

BACKGROUND

Clovis was the son of Childeric I, a king of the Salian Franks, and Basina, a Thuringian princess. The dynasty he founded is, however, named after his supposed ancestor, Merovech. Some sources claim that Clovis' grandfather was Chlodio, but his exact relation with Merovech is not known.

Numerous small Frankish petty kingdoms existed during the 5th century. The Salian Franks was the first-known Frankish tribe that settled with official Roman permission within the empire, first in Batavia in the Rhine-Maas delta, and then in 375 in Toxandria, which in the present day consists of the province of North Brabant in the Netherlands and parts of neighbouring provinces of Antwerp and Limburg in Belgium. This put them in the northern part of the Roman civitas Tungrorum, with the Romanized population still dominant south of the military highway Boulogne-Cologne. Later, Chlodio seems to have attacked westwards from this area to take control of the Roman populations in Tournai, then southwards to Artois, and Cambrai, eventually controlling an area stretching to the Somme river.

Childeric I, Clovis's father, was reputed to be a relative of Chlodio and was known as the king of the Franks who fought as an army within northern Gaul. In 463, he fought in conjunction with Aegidius, the magister militum of northern Gaul, to defeat the Visigoths in Orléans. Childeric died in 481 and was buried in Tournai; Clovis succeeded him as king, aged just 15. Historians believe that Childeric and Clovis were both commanders of the Roman military in the province of Belgica Secunda and were subordinate to the magister militum. The Franks of Tournai came to dominate their neighbours, initially aided by the association with Aegidius.

The death of Aetius in 454 led to the decline of imperial power in Gaul; leaving the Visigoths and the Burgundians competing for predominance in the area. The part of Gaul still under Roman control emerged as a kingdom under Syagrius, Aegidius's son.

Though no primary sources expounding on the language spoken by Clovis exist, historical linguists consider it likely that, based on his family history and core territories, he spoke a form of Old Dutch. In this, the early Merovingians can be contrasted with the later Carolingians, such as Charlemagne, of the late 8th century and onward, who probably spoke various forms of Old High German.

EARLY REIGN (481 - 491)

Battle of Soissons

The ruler of Tournai died in 481 and was succeeded by his young son, Clovis. His band of warriors probably numbered no more than half a thousand. In 486 he began his efforts to expand the realm by allying himself with his relative Ragnachar, king of Cambrai and another Frankish king, Chalaric. These rulers are sometimes referred to as *regulus* (diminutive of *rex*). Together the triumvirate marched against Syagrius and met the Gallo-Roman commander at Soissons. During the battle, Chalaric betrayed his comrades by refusing to take part in the fighting. Despite the betrayal, the Franks landed a decisive victory, forcing Syagrius to flee to the court of Alaric II. This battle is viewed as bringing about the end of the rump state of the Western Roman Empire outside of Italy. Following the battle, Clovis invaded the traitor Chalaric's territory and was able to imprison him and his son.

Taming Gaul

A Frankish campaign against the Thoringi is said to have taken place around 491 AD, and resulted in a defeat for the latter. These *Thoringi* are usually identified as the Thuringii (or 'Thuringians').

Five years after the Frankish king, Clovis I, ascended to the throne, he set about extending his influence over, not just over other Frankish kingdoms, but also over other Germanic tribes, including the Alemanni and Thuringians. In 486, Clovis advanced deep into Gaul with other Salian kings, and attached and defeated their last Roman ruler, Syagrius, at Soissons in 486. Thereafter he embarked on a campaign against the Burgundians, before turning on the Thuringians.

The only source for this event is a single sentence written by the 6th-century historian Gregory of Tours, who records that Clovis "conquered the Thoringi" in the tenth year of his reign (dated to 491–492):

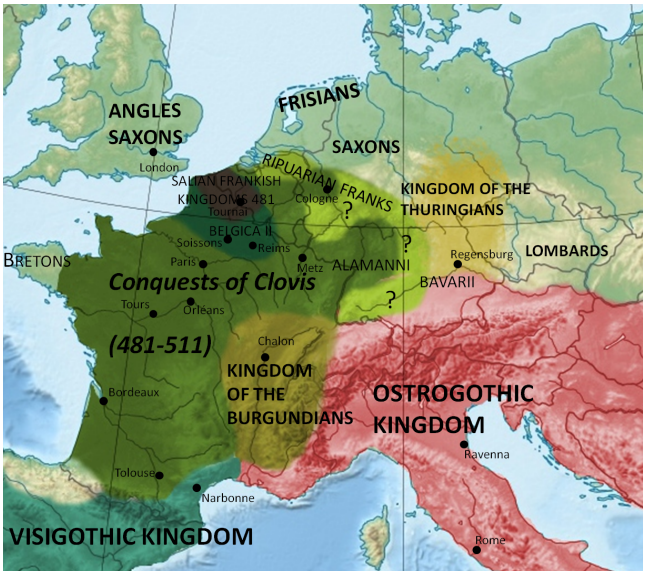
Nam decimo regni sui anno *Thoringis* bellum intulit eosdemque suis diccionibus subiugavit.
In the tenth year of his reign he [=Clovis] made war on the Thoringi and brought them under his dominion.
—Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* (Book 2, Chapter 27)

According to Bachrach (2001), this event should be situated in the area of the modern-day state of Hesse. This tribe, whose 'heartland' Bachrach claimed was further east, was bounded to the north by Frisia, to the south by Alemannia and to the east by the River Weser, on the far side of which was part of Saxony.[8]

Most scholars think the territory of this particular Thuringian group was absorbed into the Frankish kingdom; however, the 'main region' of the Thuringians was not conquered until 531 when Clovis's sons, Chlotar I and Theudebert I, subjected them.

Guy Halsall (2007) cast doubt on the reliability of the passage in the *History of the Franks*, because 'the Thuringians clearly retained their independence' and were not fully subjected by the Franks until 531–4. He stated that 'Clovis' alleged victory over and subjection of the Thuringians' is 'probably unlikely', and pointed out that scholars disagree about the size of the Thuringian kingdom, with some arguing for 'a 'Greater Thuringia' stretching from the Elbe to the mouth of the Rhine and including the Saxon areas', while others hold a minimal view that restricts the Thuringian kingdom to a 'core area' in modern eastern Germany, with the river Unstrut as its southwestern limit. Finally, Halsall adds that the event cannot be dated. Despite the 10th regnal year of Clovis provided by Gregory of Tours, the reliability of this claim has been disputed as well. Edward James (1988) stated: 'Whenever Gregory's dates for Clovis's reign can be checked by external sources, Gregory is wrong.'

Scholars Lanting & van der Plicht (2010) argued that Gregory of Tours' mention of *Thoringia*, *in terminum Thoringorum* and *Thoringi* in Book II Chapter 9 and 27 are misspellings that have been misinterpreted. Although many later readers associated this name with the eastern German realm of Thuringia (German: *Thüringen*), Gregory tells that the Franks 'came from Pannonia and all dwelt at first on the bank of the Rhine, and then crossing the Rhine they passed into Thoringia'. As both Pannonia and Thuringia lie to the east of the Rhine, crossing the Rhine made the Franks move to the west (towards modern Belgium, the Netherlands and France), away from Thuringia (in modern eastern Germany). More likely, Gregory actually meant the *Civitas Tungrorum*, the land of the Tungri (or *Tungria*, centred around modern Tongeren), which was located west of the Rhine, and in the direction of the Loire (which he explicitly situated south of *Thoringia*), Rhône and Somme rivers that he mentioned next, and the city of Cambrai that the Franks conquered next. As eastern German Thuringia wasn't annexed to the Frankish Empire until 531–4, Gregory couldn't have meant that region, but the *Civitas Tungrorum* is a very plausible alternative for 491–2.



The Conquests of Clovis

Prior to the battle, Clovis did not enjoy the support of the Gallo-Roman clergy, so he proceeded to pillage the Roman territory, including the churches. The Bishop of Reims requested Clovis return everything taken from the Church of Reims; the young king aspired to establish cordial relationships with the clergy, so he returned a valuable ewer taken from the church. Despite his position, some Roman cities refused to yield to the Franks, namely Verdun – which surrendered after a brief siege – and Paris, which stubbornly resisted a few years, perhaps as many as five. He made Paris his capital and established an abbey dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul on the south bank of the Seine.

Realizing that he would not be able to rule Gaul without the help of the clergy, Clovis took a Catholic wife to please them. He also integrated many of Syagrius's units into his own army. The Roman kingdom was probably under Clovis's control by 491 because in the same year, Clovis successfully moved against a small number of Thuringians in eastern Gaul, near the Burgundian border.

MIDDLE REIGN (492 - 506)

Audofleda

Audofleda (c. 467 – c. 511), was a Gothic queen of the Ostrogothic Kingdom by marriage to Theoderic the Great.

She was the sister of Clovis I, King of the Franks. She married Theoderic the Great, King of the Ostrogoths (471–526), around 493 AD (exact date unknown). Theoderic sent an embassy to Clovis to request the marriage. This political move allied Theoderic with the Franks, and by marrying his daughters off to the kings of the Burgundians, the Vandals, and the Visigoths, he allied himself with every major 'Barbarian' kingdom in the West.

Audofleda was a pagan prior to her marriage, and was baptised at the time of her wedding by an Arian bishop. Theoderic and Audofleda had one daughter, Amalasuntha, who ruled the Ostrogoths from 526 until 534.

Around 493 AD, he (Clovis) secured an alliance with the Ostrogoths through the marriage of his sister Audofleda to their king, Theodoric the Great. In the same year, the neighboring King of the Burgundians was slain by his brother, Gundobad; bringing civil strife to that kingdom. Allegedly, Gundobad proceeded to drown his sister-in-law and force his niece, Chrona, into a convent. Another niece, Clotilde, fled to the court of the third brother, Godegisel. Finding himself in a precarious position, Godegisel decided to ally himself to Clovis by marrying his exiled niece to the Frankish king.

Assault of the Alamanni

In 496, the Alamanni invaded and some Salians and Ripuarians *reguli* (kings) defected to their side. Clovis met his enemies near the strong fort of Tolbiac. During the fighting, the Franks suffered heavy losses. Clovis, together with over three thousand Frankish companions, may have converted to Christianity around this time. With the help of the Ripuarian Franks he narrowly defeated the Alamanni in the Battle of Tolbiac in 496. Now Christian, Clovis confined his prisoners, Chararic and his son, to a monastery.

The Battle of Tolbiac was fought between the Franks, who were fighting under Clovis I, and the Alamanni, whose leader is not known. The date of the battle has traditionally been given as 496, though other accounts suggest it may either have been fought earlier, in the 480s or early 490s, or later, in 506. The site of "Tolbiac", or "Tolbiacum", is usually given as Zülpich, North Rhine-Westphalia, about 60 km east of what is now the German-Belgian frontier. The Franks were successful at Tolbiac and established their dominance over the Alamanni.

The Franks were two neighboring peoples, and allies: the Salian Franks, whose king was Clovis, and the Ripuarian Franks, whose capital was Cologne and whose king was Sigebert the Lame. Bordering on Sigebert's kingdom were the Alemanni, a confederation of Germanic tribes. Border incidents, looting, and punitive raids multiplied between the Alemanni and Ripuarian Franks, but in 496 Sigebert suffered a real invasion and called on Clovis for help. Clovis responded favorably to his ally and raised an army. It is generally accepted that in defending Tolbiac, Sigebert and his army suffered heavy losses. There may have been two battles of Tolbiac.

Battle of Tolbiac

Little is known about the battle, except that the Ripuarian Franks were probably of no help after the first battle. Clovis saw his warriors being killed and felt the battle was getting out of hand. Moved to tears, he called upon the God of his wife Clotilde, the God that she had preached to him since their marriage in 493, asking for his help.

Gregory of Tours records Clovis's prayer in chapter II of the *History of the Franks*: "O Jesus Christ, you who as Clotilde tells me are the son of the Living God, you who give succor to those who are in danger, and victory to those accorded who hope in Thee, I seek the glory of devotion with your assistance: If you give me victory over these enemies, and if I experience the miracles that the people committed to your name say they have had, I believe in you, and I will be baptized in your name. Indeed, I invoked my gods, and, as I am experiencing, they failed to help me, which makes me believe that they are endowed with no powers, that they do not come to the aid of those who serve. It's to you I cry now, I want to believe in you if only I may be saved from my opponents." At these words, the Alemanni began to flee, as their leader had been killed with an axe. The Franks subdued or killed the remaining Alemanni.

Gregory of Tours was the first to have mentioned the element that has shaped subsequent interpretations of Tolbiac as climactic in European history: Clovis is said to have attributed his success to a vow that he had made: if he won, he would convert to the religion of the Christian God who had aided him. He became a Christian in a ceremony at Reims on Christmas 496. The traditional date of the battle of Tolbiac has been established to accord with this firmly attested baptismal date, by accepting Gregory's account. A surviving letter from Avitus of Vienne, congratulating Clovis on his baptism, makes no mention of the supposed recent battlefield conversion.

Historia Francorum ii.30-31 directly affirms a parallel Gregory establishes with the conversion of Constantine the Great before the Battle of Milvian Bridge:

> At last a war arose with the Alamanni, in which he was driven by necessity to confess what before he had of his free will denied. It came about that as the two armies were fighting fiercely, there was much slaughter, and Clovis's army began to be in danger of destruction. He saw it and raised his eyes to heaven, and with remorse in his heart he burst into tears and cried: "Jesus Christ, whom Clotilde asserts to be the son of the Living God, who art said to give aid to those in distress, and to bestow victory on those who hope in thee, I beseech the glory of thy aid, with the vow that if thou wilt grant me victory over these enemies, and I shall know that power which she says that people dedicated in thy name have had from thee, I will believe in thee and be baptized in thy name. For I have invoked my own gods but, as I find, they have withdrawn from aiding me; and therefore I believe that they possess no power, since they do not help those who obey them. I now call upon thee, I desire to believe thee only let me be rescued from my adversaries." And when he said thus, the Alamanni turned their backs, and began to disperse in flight. And when they saw that their king was killed, they submitted to the dominion of Clovis, saying: "Let not the people perish further, we pray; we are yours now." And he stopped the fighting, and after encouraging his men, retired in peace and told the queen how he had had merit to win the victory by calling on the name of Christ. This happened in the fifteenth year of his reign. Then the queen asked saint Remi, bishop of Rheims, to summon Clovis secretly, urging him to introduce the king to the word of salvation. And the bishop sent for him secretly and began to urge him to believe in the true God, maker of heaven and earth, and to cease worshipping idols, which could help neither themselves nor any one else. But the king said: "I gladly hear you, most holy father; but there remains one thing: the people who follow me

> cannot endure to abandon their gods; but I shall go and speak to them according to your words." He met with his followers, but before he could speak the power of God anticipated him, and all the people cried out together: "O pious king, we reject our mortal gods, and we are ready to follow the immortal God whom Remi preaches." This was reported to the bishop, who was greatly rejoiced, and bade them get ready the baptismal font. The squares were shaded with tapestried canopies, the churches adorned with white curtains, the baptistery set in order, the aroma of incense spread, candles of fragrant odor burned brightly, and the whole shrine of the baptistery was filled with a divine fragrance: and the Lord gave such grace to those who stood by that they thought they were placed amid the odors of paradise. And the king was the first to ask to be baptized by the bishop. Another Constantine advanced to the baptismal font...

The Alemanni abandoned the Lower Rhine and left the Ripuarian Franks alone. Clovis, who profited only a little, allowed his ally to retain the territory. Clovis later relied on Sigebert's assistance during the conquest of the northern part of the Visigothic kingdom.

Another consequence was the conversion of Clovis to Catholicism as he was baptized by Bishop Remigius of Rheins, who wrote him a letter regarding his conversion. This brought him the support of neighbouring Christians, along with that of the influential clergy. In addition, it allowed Clovis to undertake conquests and crusades to Christianise his new territories or expunge Arianism, considered heretics by the clergy.

The traditional date of the battle in 496 was challenged by Augustine Van de Vyver, whose revised chronology placed the battle in 506. This was extensively debated and is followed in some modern accounts. The date of 506 also follows Gregory's chronology, which places the death of Clovis' father, Childeric I, around the same time as that of St. Perpetuus, who died in 491. Hence 15 years from 491 would be 506. Childeric's grave contained coins of Emperor Zeno, who died in 491, but none after.

First Franco-Visigothic War (496 - 498)

The Franco-Visigothic War (496–498) also known as the First Franco-Visigothic War was an armed conflict between the Franks and the Visigoths. In this conflict, the Franks were the aggressors who tried to gain a foothold in Aquitaine, where the Aquitanian Goths had been in power since the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The main opponents in this war were the kings Clovis and Alaric II. The war ended in a defeat for Clovis.

Bishop Gregory of Tours (538–594), the main source about the life of Clovis, reports little to nothing about this first Franco-Visigothic war in his writings. Probably the defeat of Clovis did not fit into the image he wanted to create of him. Other contemporary sources do report on the hostilities between Franks and Visigoths and on this basis it is possible to reconstruct the course of the war in which Clovis carried out at least two raids.

The deeper cause of this war is in a sense the disintegration of the Late Roman army in the west after the fall of Emperor Majorian in 461 and the power vacuum that arose afterwards. In Gaul, population groups revolted and army leaders of both Roman or Barbarian origin tried to fill the vacuum by taking matters into their own hands.

Clovis was a Frankish warlord who surfaced as a clewd and calculated politician. In 481 at the beginning of his reign, he only had a base of power in Tournai, but barely five years later he had overthren his rival Syagrius and thus acquired authority over the former Roman army in Gaul. Around 495 Clovis controlled all the former Roman territory in northern Gaul and felt strong enough to attack Alaric in the south. To maintain his fixed army, he needed loot. This was widely available in southern Gaul where the Aquitanian Goths had been given control.

The immediate reason can be found in the political situation of Spain at that time. Alaric's father Euric had indeed established his hegemony here, but this did not mean that the Iberian territories were directly under Gothic rule. The peninsula was home to numerous autonomous players, such as the large cities and communities such as the Suebi and Basques. In addition, there was no standing army in Spain. Regular military campaigns had to be sent south to maintain local control. The rebellion of Burdunellus in 496 fits into this image. This uprising threatened to endanger Gothic hegemony. The rebellion demanded all the attention of Alaric and for Clovis this was an excellent reason to invade Aquitaine.

Prior to his invasion, Clovis strengthened his position by forming alliances with other Frankish leaders and with the Gallo-Romans in Armorica, the Armorici.

In the course of 496 he besieged Nantes; the northernmost city under Visigothic rule. Nantes resisted the besiegers for sixty days. The Frankish commander, *Chilo* was impressed and thus converted to Catholicism. During this phase, because of the Spanish uprising, Alaric was insufficiently able to give Clovis battle, causing Clovis Poitiers, Saintes and Bordeaux besieged. During the latter, an important Visigothic nobleman, *Duke Suatrius of Bordeaux*, was captured. On the way back from Bordeaux, Clovis may also have taken Tours.

Alaric did not leave it at these losses and after he had crushed the uprising in Spain, he prepared for a counterattack. In 496, despite winning the Battle of Tolbiac against the Alemanni, the Franks suffered heavy losses (and possibly suffered from internal unrest) against the Visigoths. When Alaric saw the opportunity, he recaptured Bordeaux, Saintes, Poitiers and Tours (if it had been taken) in 498. With these reconquests, all previously experienced losses were made up for, and the result of Clovi's war was largely nil, even though Nantes was apparently taken by the Armoricians.

Despite resounding victories of Clovis at the beginning of this war, in which his armies were able to plunder cheerfully, this first Frankish-Visigothic confrontation ended in defeat. It seems that Clovis was mainly motivated to gather war loot for his army and was not so much out to conquer Visigothic Aquitaine. But the fact that he went far into the Gothic region does indicate that he was blazing with self-confidence and confidently contested the hegemony over Gaul with the Goths, which would also turn out a few years later.

Burgundian Civil War (500 – 501)

The Burgundian Civil War was a military conflict between the Burgundian kings Gundobad and Godigisel. The war took place around 500 in the former Roman provinces Gallia Lugdunesis I and Maxima Sequanorum, where a Burgundian state had emerged after the Fall of the Western Roman Empire. The kings were brothers who both controlled a part. Besides the two brothers, the kings of the Franks and Visigoths were involved.

The story of this war is briefly described by the bishop of Tours Gregory in his *Historia Francorum*. This bishop wrote a history of the Franks in the second half of the 6th century, more than 75 years after the events took place. In his report the Burgundians as a neighboring people of the Franks are mentioned sideways - in a negative way. Thanks to this report, the course of the civil war can be reconstructed in broad outlines. However, Gregorius's account has the disadvantage that it contradicts other contemporary sources in some parts. The chronicle of Marius of Avenches, on the other hand, provides important additional information and dates the civil war to the year 500. In addition to Gregory of Tours and Marius of Avenches, the letters of Avitus of Vienne are also of importance for this history.

The cause for this war must be sought in the succession problems after the death of Gundioc who, together with his brother Chilperic I had a power base in Gallia Lugdunensis I. Not Gundioc's sons, but Chilperik continued the kingship over the Burgundian people. The sons played a prominent role in the late Roman army. Of them, Gundobad in Italy reached the position of *magister militum praesentalis*, commander-in-chief of the army. Unfortunately is the story of Gregory of Tour's about the beginning of the events unreliable. With respect to Clovis he puts Gundobad in an evil light and blames him for the death of his brothers Gundomar and Chilperic II. Recent research believes that these two brothers had already been dead when Chilperic I died in 480 and Godegisel and Gundobad shared the rule. Political unrest and dissatisfaction with the territorial division may have been a powerful driver for rivalry between the remaining brothers and this eventually led to the conflict.

Gundobad ruled most of the Burgundian territory with residences in Lyon and Vienne, while his brother Godegisel controlled a smaller area with the capital Geneva. According to Gregory of Tours, Godgisel was dissatisfied with this, and secretly asked the Frankish king Clovis for support against his more powerful brother. In return, he promised him estimates and transfer of territories in case of success. Together they plotted a plan to bring down Gundobad. In this plan, Godegisel remained friends with his brother so as not to arouse suspicion. In the course of 500, Clovis and his army attacked Gundobad on his territory, after which he turned to his brother for help and together the brothers marched against the invaders. However, when the three armies met near Dijon, the troops of Godigisel joined the army of the opponent and his brother had to defend himself alone.

In the battle the united armies defeated Gundobad, who fled to the far south of his empire, to Avignon. According to the chronicler Marius of Avenches, this battle took place at Dijon in the year 500. Godesel was satisfied with his success and considered himself the only king of the kingdom and went triumphantly to Vienne.

Despite the fact that they had reached the victory, the war had not yet been settled. Clovis marched alone to Avignon to capture Gundobad. The city was besieged for a long time until a Roman magistrate of the city and a general, Aridius, managed to convince Clovis that the city could not be taken. That is why Clovis reconciled with Gundobad left the kingdom after a conversation with Gundobad, who agreed to pay annual tribute.

Gundobad searched for a way to get rid of the unfavorable peace with Clovis and found it with the Aquitanian Goths who had been in war with the Franks three years earlier. With the Gothic *rex* Alarik II closed Gundobad in 501 an alliance. Assured of his support, he stopped paying the annual estimates and attacked his brother by besieging him in the city of Vienne. After the city capitulated, Gundobad executed Godegisel and many of his Burgundian followers, and thus re-established himself as the king of the Burgundians.

As a thank you for his help, Gundobad donated Avignon to the Goths and sent him the Frankish prisoners of war. Alarik then visited Clovis near the village Amboise, where Alarik agreed to release the prisoners, while Clovis returned all the Gothic territory he still had in his hands. Although not handed down, Gundobad may also be involved in this peace, which lasted only a few years. In the Frankish-Gothic War witch broke out in 507, Gundobad was an ally of Clovis.

Armorici Allies

In 501, 502 or 503, Clovis led his troops to Armorica. He had previously restricted his operations to minor raids, but now the goal was subjugation. Clovis failed to complete this objective via military means; therefore, he was constrained to statecraft. This proved fruitful, for the Armonici shared Clovis's disdain for the Arian Visigoths. Armorica and its fighters were thus integrated into the Frankish realm.

LATE REIGN (507 - 511)

Franco-Gothic War

The Franco–Gothic War (507–511), also known as the Second Frankish–Visigothic War, was a military conflict between the Franks and the Visigoths aimed at the hegemony of Gaul. The main opponents in this war were the kings Clovis I and Alaric II. In addition, the Burgundian king Gundobad and the Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great and the Eastern Roman Emperor Anastasius I Dicorus played an important role.

The political map of the former Western Roman Empire had been drastically changed on the eve of this war. A new player had appeared on the scene with the arrival of Theodoric the Great in Italy, whose Goths in Italy put an end to the reign of Odoaker. The Burgundian Civil War of 500–501 also brought some changes: Clovis was invited by Godigisel to intervene and Gundobad, who was being besieged by the Franks in Avignon, turned to Theodoric to come and help him. In Aquitaine, Alaric II kept aside and was busy strengthening Gothic power over the Iberian Peninsula. In the end, the Burgundian civil war was decided in favor of Gundobad, but he had become indebted to the Franks.

After the end of the Burgundian Civil War, Clovis and Alaric made peace at a meeting on an island in the Loire River.[3] Both sides had suffered heavy losses in the previous confrontation and Clovis had to give up all his conquests when he was finally defeated over the Loire. In addition to new alliances, marriages were also concluded. Theodoric, the new protagonist, was in favor of strengthening ties. He married Audofleda, the sister of Clovis, Clovis married Clothilde, a Burgundian princess, while Alaric II married Theodoric's daughter.

Clovis must have been aware that Theodoric's web of alliances stood his plan in the way to acquire the hegemony over Gaul for himself. Despite this, his chances increased significantly when another uprising broke out in Hispania in 506 and he unexpectedly got two new allies at his side who had everyone's motives to support him. Gundobad sided with Clovis because he thought he could make up for losses suffered earlier. And partly thanks to Gundobads' relations, Clovis was able to establish good relations with emperor Anastasius I Dicorus in Constantinople. Anastasius, also emperor of the former Western Roman Empire, feared Theodoric's power in the west and wanted to prevent a new emperor from coming. Theodoric must have been aware that a Roman invasion was imminent because he kept his troops ready to resist a possible invasion.

In the run-up to the new war, religion also played a significant role. The Goths were Arian Christians while the majority of the Romans believed in the Catholic faith. Based on various contemporary sources, it can be seen that it was a publicly widespread tradition that Clovis made the promise that he would be converted to the Catholic faith in Tours. In doing so, he hoped to win support from the Catholic population in the south. Alaric II, in turn, convened a council to obtain support from the bishops in his domain. In addition, it is said that he published a compilation of legislation tailored to the needs of the Gallo–Roman population. With these actions, he mainly tried to cultivate goodwill. Clovis is known to have sent letters to Aquitanian bishops in which he reported that his predominantly Pagan army would not sin in looting.

The composition and numerical strength of the armies is mostly unknown: only the size of Anastasius' expedition army has been reported with 8,000 soldiers. The remaining armies all came from the Late Roman army or had been associated with it. The Gothic army had a long track record as the Frankish army did, while Gundobad still wear the title *Magister militum*.[9] A comparison with previous and later decades shows that it is more likely that they had armies composed of several thousand men,[10] with the aristocrats and their entourage forming the heavy cavalry. The armies also had large numbers of archers.[11] With the Armorican army, his own Gallo–Roman and Frankish troops and supplemented by the Burgundian militias, the army of Clovis was between 10,000–15,000 men strong. The Aquitanian army must have had the same size, while Theodoric had an army of about 10,000 soldiers.

In the spring of 507, Clovis began a new Gothic war. It is quite clear that his intention this time was to conquer the south and not a raid like the previous war, because Clovis forbade his men to plunder the country. Clovis had previously strengthened himself with Gallo–Roman troops from Armorica and began his attack by first taking Tours. From there he crossed the Vienne river which was difficult: it was swollen due to heavy rains. Moreover, this time the element of surprise was missing and Clovis struggled to control his troops, a monastery almost went up in flames.

Battle of Vouillé

The Battle of Vouillé (from Latin *Campus Vogladensis*) was fought in the northern marches of Visigothic territory, at Vouillé, near Poitiers (Gaul), around Spring 507 between the Franks, commanded by Clovis, and the Visigoths, commanded by Alaric II. The Franks' victory resulted in their conquest of Gallia Aquitania and the death of Alaric II.

After Clovis's victories over the Alemanni east of the Rhine and over the Burgundians in the Rhone Valley, the Franks' growing power posed a threat to Alaric II's territory in Aquitaine and Hispania. Despite Theodoric the Great's attempts to broker a peace between the factions, Clovis began a campaign to seize Aquitaine and Alaric's center of power in Toulouse. Alaric, his army, and a force of Auvergnants militia commanded by Apollinaris of Clermont marched north and met the Frankish army in Gaul.

Clovis's army was slowed by a rain-swollen Vienne River, yet his forces were able to engage the Visigoths south of Vouillé. With his missile troops stationed at the rear of his army, Clovis sent the rest of the army forward to fight hand-to-hand with the Visigoths. Despite being in a superior army in size and equipment, Alaric's soldiers wavered as all of the Auvergnat commanders except Apollinaris were killed. During the melée Clovis allegedly killed the Visigothic king Alaric, whereupon the Visigothic army broke and fled. Clovis's army proceeded south and plundered Alaric's treasure at Toulouse.

After Clovis's success in this battle, Byzantine Emperor Anastasius made him an honorary consul and patrician. The battle forced the Visigoths to retreat to Septimania, which they continued to hold, and the Franks' success at Vouillé allowed them to control the southwestern part of France and to capture Toulouse. Alaric's illegitimate son Gesalec tried to organise a counterstrike at Narbonne, but he was deposed and ultimately killed when Narbonne was taken by Burgundian allies of the Franks. Clovis eventually drove the Goths out of Angoulême and his son, Theuderic I, defeated the Goths in Hispania.

As he marched from Nantes to Poitiers, Clovis' march was interrupted by Alaric II – who was apparently aware of Clovis' support among the Catholics of his subjects – and who decided to confront the Franks before they could join forces. The outcome of this first major battle was disastrous for him. Gregory of Tours, the main source on the details of this battle, reports that the nucleus of the Visigothic army was destroyed and Alaric II was killed by Clovis in a duel.

The threat of an invasion by the Eastern Roman army meant that Theodoric could not interfere in the battle. The raid actually took place in early 508 in the boot of Italy, but the Roman intervention was not aimed at conquest. It did not seek confrontation with Theodoric's army and limited itself only to the conquest and plundering of cities in the south. Only when Theodoric had the situation under control, he sent an army to the south to assist the Visigoths.

Siege of Arles

The siege of Arles between 507 and 508 was a battle between the Franks and Burgundians, who wanted to occupy Provence, and the Visigothic Kingdom, who had the support of the Ostrogothic Kingdom.

After the Fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Franks created their own kingdom under the Merovingian dynasty, and wanted to expel the Visigoths from Gaul for their Arianism. Aided by the Catholic clergy and the Gallic populations dominated by the Arian Visigoths and Burgundians, Clovis I decided to attack the Kingdom of the Burgundians in 500.

After the severe defeat at the Battle of Dijon, Gundobad left the city and fled south, pursued by Clovis and Godegisel, leaving Lyons and Vienne to Clovis. He finally waited for him at Avignon, where he was besieged and signed peace in return for paying tribute and yielding Vienne to his brother. But he was finally defeated and killed by his rival, when he attacked the capital in 502.

Probably in the autumn of 507, when returning from the campaign in Septimania, the city was besieged by a coalition of Burgundians reinforced by Franks, but far from welcoming these invaders, the city defended itself against the attacks with great energy.

Fearful that the instability in Gaul would spread to Italy, Theodoric the Great sent an army commanded by Ibbas, which set out for Provence on 24 June 508 to secure the border east of the Rhone and the south of the Durance.

A vigorous action by General Tuluin repelled the attackers on the right bank and allowed the control of the Bridge of Constantine , which connects the city with the island of Camargue, to the north of the city, at the foot of the walls. The Frankish and Burgundian troops raised the siege with a great defeat. According to Jordanes, they lost 30,000 soldiers but this seems exaggerated. The Ostrogoths returned to the city and brought a huge number of prisoners who filled the basilica and even the bishop's house. Caesarius of Arles had to melt the silver of the church to free the captives. Theodoric the Great supported Amalaric as king of the Visigoths, and sent Ibbas to fight Gesalec, taking Carcassonne and Narbonne in 509, forcing him to take refuge in Barcelona, where he was attacked and deposed in 510.

With their monarch killed, the Visigothic army fled in dismay, southern Aquitaine was completely open to the Frankish army. Clovis sent his eldest son Theuderic to the east to occupy the Gothic cities in the Auvergne. The Frankish prince marched from Clermont to Rodez and eventually arrived at Albi. Meanwhile, Gundobad had invaded the South with an army. Assisted by the Franks, he besieged Arles. However, after a prolonged siege, the Ostrogoths led by Ibbas intervened in 508 and inflicted heavy casualties, forcing the Burgundians to retreat.

End of the War

Clovis sank further south and took all the cities he encountered. At the end of 507, Clovis was able to conquer Bordeaux and spent the winter there. The following year, Clovis was able to seize the enemy capital of Toulouse and their treasury. The Visigothic court had been moved to Narbonne, which is why Clovis sought to take it too, but the city was protected by mountainous terrain, so Clovis was forced to besiege Carcassonne, located between Toulouse and Narbonne. However, the siege ended in failure, as Ostrogothic auxiliary forces led by Ibbas also arrived there and managed to expel the Franks. The defeated Clovis returned and took Angoulême, which he initially ignored. To destroy the Ostrogoths' opportunities to recapturn cities, Clovis installed extensive garrisons in the newly captured cities.

After the defeat and death of Alaric, the Goths chose his eldest son Gesalic as his successor. In the south he withstand and received help from the Ostrogoths who recaptured Narbonne and defended Arles against Frankish conquest, after which a stalemate arose. As far as is known, no major battles were fought after that.

Unification of the Franks

Following the Battle of Vouillé, Clovis eliminated all his possible rivals, including the other Frankish kings who ruled alongside him.

Sometime after 507, Clovis heard about Chararic's plan to escape from his monastic prison and had him murdered. Around the same time, Clovis convinced Prince Chlodoric to murder his father Sigobert, earning him his nickname as "Chlodoric the Parricide". Following the murder, Clovis betrayed Chlodoric and had his envoys strike him down. Sometime later, Clovis visited his old ally Ragnachar in Cambrai. Following his conversion to Christianity in 508, many of Clovis' pagan retainers had defected to Ragnachar's side, making him a political threat. Ragnachar denied Clovis's entry, prompting Clovis to make a move against him. He bribed Ragnachar's retainers and executed him alongside his brother Ricchar.

BAPTISM

Clovis was born a pagan but later became interested in converting to Arian Christianity, whose followers believed that Jesus was a distinct and separate being from God the Father, both subordinate to and created by him. This contrasted with Nicene Christianity, whose followers believe that God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are three persons of one being (consubstantiality). While the theology of the Arians was declared a heresy at the First Council of Nicea in 325, the missionary work of Bishop Ulfilas converted a significant portion of the pagan Goths to Arian Christianity in the 4th century. By the time of the ascension of Clovis, Gothic Arians dominated Christian Gaul, and Nicene Christians were the minority.

Clovis's wife Clotilde, a Burgundian princess, was a Nicene Christian despite the Arianism that surrounded her at court. Her persistence eventually persuaded Clovis to convert to Nicene Christianity, which he initially resisted. Clotilde had wanted her son to be baptized, but Clovis refused, so she had the child baptized without Clovis's knowledge. Shortly after his baptism, their son died, which further strengthened Clovis's resistance to conversion. Clotilde also had their second son baptized without her husband's permission, and this son became ill and nearly died after his baptism. Clovis eventually converted to Nicene Christianity (Catholicism) on Christmas Day 508 in a small church in the vicinity of the subsequent Abbey of Saint-Remi in Reims; a statue of his baptism by Saint Remigius can still be seen there. The details of this event have been passed down by Gregory of Tours, who recorded them many years later in the 6th century.

The king's Nicene baptism was of immense importance in the subsequent history of Western and Central Europe in general, as Clovis expanded his dominion over almost all of Gaul. Catholicism offered certain advantages to Clovis as he fought to distinguish his rule among many competing power centers in Western Europe. His conversion to the Nicene form of Christianity served to set him apart from most other Germanic kings of his time, such as those of the Visigoths and the Vandals, who had converted from Germanic paganism to Arian Christianity. However, he was not the first Germanic king to convert to Nicene Christianity, that distinction belonging to the Suevic king of Gallaecia Rechiar, whose conversion predates Clovis's baptism by half a century. Nevertheless, Clovis's embrace of the Catholic faith may have also gained him the support of the Catholic Gallo-Roman aristocracy in his later campaign against the Visigoths, which drove them from southern Gaul in 507 and resulted in a great many of his people converting to Catholicism as well.

On the other hand, Bernard Bachrach has argued that his conversion from Frankish paganism alienated many of the other Frankish sub-kings and weakened his military position over the next few years. In the *interpretatio romana*, Saint Gregory of Tours gave the Germanic gods that Clovis abandoned the names of roughly equivalent Roman gods, such as Jupiter and Mercury. William Daly, more directly assessing Clovis's allegedly barbaric and pagan origins, ignored the Gregory of Tours version and based his account on the scant earlier sources, a sixth-century *"vita"* of Saint Genevieve and letters to or concerning Clovis from bishops (now in the *Epistolae Austrasicae*) and Theodoric.

Clovis and his wife were buried in the Abbey of St Genevieve (St. Pierre) in Paris; the original name of the church was the Church of the Holy Apostles.

ROMAN LAW

Under Clovis, the first codification of the Salian Frank law took place. The *Roman Law* was written with the assistance of Gallo-Romans to reflect the Salic legal tradition and Christianity, while containing much from Roman tradition. The *Roman Law* lists various crimes as well as the fines associated with them.

DEATH

Shortly before his death, Clovis called a synod of Gallic bishops to meet in Orléans to reform the Church and create a strong link between the Crown and the Catholic episcopate. This was the First Council of Orléans. Thirty-three bishops assisted and passed 31 decrees on the duties and obligations of individuals, the right of sanctuary, and ecclesiastical discipline. These decrees, equally applicable to Franks and Romans, first established equality between conquerors and conquered. After his death, Clovis was laid to rest in the Abbey of St Genevieve in Paris.

His remains were relocated to Saint Denis Basilica in the mid- to late 18th century. When Clovis died, his kingdom was partitioned among his four sons, Theuderic, Chlodomer, Childebert and Clotaire. This partition created the new political units of the Kingdoms of Rheims, Orléans, Paris and Soissons, and inaugurated a tradition that would lead to disunity lasting until the end of the Merovingian dynasty in 751. Clovis had been a king with no fixed capital and no central administration beyond his entourage. By deciding to be interred at Paris, Clovis gave the city symbolic weight. When his grandchildren divided royal power 50 years after his death in 511, Paris was kept as a joint property and a fixed symbol of the dynasty.

The disunity continued under the Carolingians until, after a brief unity under Charlemagne, the Franks splintered into distinct spheres of cultural influence that coalesced around Eastern and Western centers of royal power. These later political, linguistic, and cultural entities became the Kingdom of France, the myriad German States, and the semi-autonomous kingdoms of Burgundy and Lotharingia.

LEGACY

The legacy of Clovis's conquests, a Frankish kingdom that included most of Roman Gaul and parts of western Germany, survived long after his death. To many French people, he is the founder of the modern French state.

Detracting, perhaps, from this legacy, is his aforementioned division of the state. This was done not along national or even largely geographical lines, but primarily to assure equal income amongst his sons after his death. While it may or may not have been his intention, this division was the cause of much internal discord in Gaul. This precedent led, in the long run, to the fall of his dynasty, for it was a pattern repeated in future reigns. Clovis did bequeath to his heirs the support of both people and the Church such that when the magnates were ready to do away with the royal house, the sanction of the Pope was sought first.

SAINTHOOD

In later centuries, Clovis was venerated as a saint in France. The Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Denis (where Clovis was buried) had a shrine to St. Clovis to the east of the main altar. There was also a shrine to him in the Abbey of Saint Genevieve in Paris. This shrine had a statue and a number of epitaphs and was probably where the veneration of St. Clovis began. Despite Clovis's presence in Paris, his cultus was largely based in the south of France. Abbot Aymeric de Peyrat (d. 1406), the author of the History of the Moissac Abbey, claimed that his own monastery was founded by St. Clovis and there were many monasteries named in his honour. Aymeric not only referred to Clovis as a saint but also prayed for St. Clovis's intercession. There were also known to be shrines dedicated to Clovis in Église Sainte-Marthe de Tarascon and Saint-Pierre-du-Dorât. Boniface Symoneta, Jacques Almain and Paulus Aemilius Veronensis gave hagiographic accounts of Clovis's life and at the time it was common to include Clovis's life in collections of the lives of the saints.

It has been suggested that the reason that the French state promoted the veneration of Clovis in the south was to establish a border cult that would cause Occitans to venerate the northern-led French state by venerating its founder. Another reason could be that Clovis was a preferable foundation figure for the House of Valois as their predecessors were the Direct Capetians who looked back to Charlemagne whose veneration had been widely recognised. In contrast to the theory of St. Clovis's cult being a primarily northern-supported movement, Amy Goodrich Remensnyder suggests that St. Clovis was used by Occitans to reject the northern concept of the monarchy and to reinstate their autonomy as something granted by the saint.

St. Clovis had the role of a more militarised royal saint than the pious Louis IX of France. As a saint, Clovis was important as he represented the spiritual birth of the nation and provided a chivalrous and ascetic model for French political leaders to follow. The veneration of St. Clovis was not exclusive to France as a print by the Holy Roman woodcut designer Leonhard Beck made for the Habsburg monarchs depicts Clovis as St. Chlodoveus, St. Boniface's Abbey in Munich depicted St. Chlodoveus as a saint worthy of emulation because of his advocacy, and the Florentine Baroque painter Carlo Dolci painted a large depiction of St. Clovis for the Imperial Apartment in the Uffizi Gallery.

St. Clovis had no known official canonisation, neither was he beatified, so his sainthood was only ever recognised by popular acclaim. Following the example of the monks of St. Geneviève, St. Clovis's feast day in France was held on 27 November. St. Clovis enjoyed a persistent campaign from French royal authorities that few non-French national or dynastic saints did. French monarchs, beginning in the 14th century at the latest, attempted to officially canonise Clovis a number of times. The most notable attempt, led by King Louis XI and modelled on the successful canonisation campaign of Louis IX, occurred during a conflict with the Burgundians. The cause for Clovis's canonisation was taken up once again in the 17th century, with Jesuit support, a *vita* and an account of posthumous miracles, in opposition to the controversial historical works of Calvinist pastor Jean de Serres who portrayed Clovis as a cruel and bloodthirsty king.

The Jesuit attempt to formally canonize Clovis came after a rediscovery of Clovis's *cultus* in the 16th century. During this period, the dual role St. Clovis could have for modern France was clarified as that of a deeply sinful man who attained sainthood by submitting himself to the will of God, as well as being the founder of the Gallican Church. He also attained an essentially mystic reputation. St. Clovis' role in calling for the First Council of Orléans was understood to be strongly Gallican as he called it without Papal authority and with the understanding that he and his bishops had the authority to call councils that were binding for the Frankish people. For Protestant Gallicans, St. Clovis represented the role of the monarchy in governing the Church and curbing its abuses and was contrasted positively against the Papacy of his time. Protestants were unlikely to mention any of the miracles attributed to St. Clovis, sometimes even writing lengthy rejections of their existence. Instead, they saw his sainthood as evident from his creation of a state more holy and Christian than that of Rome.

Catholic writers in the 16th century expanded upon the lists of St. Clovis's attributed miracles, but in the early 17th century they also began to minimize their use of the miraculous elements of his hagiography. Mid-to-late-17th-century Jesuit writers resisted this trend and allowed for no doubt as to the miraculous nature of St. Clovis life or his sainthood. Jesuit writers stressed the more extreme elements of his hagiography, and that of other saints associated with him, even claiming that St. Remigius lived for five hundred years These hagiographies would still be quoted and widely believed as late as 1896, the fourteenth centenary of his baptism, as a speech from Cardinal Langénieux demonstrates. Another factor that led to a resurgence in St. Clovis's veneration was the Spanish Monarchy's use of the title Catholic Monarchs, a title French Monarchs hoped to usurp by attributing it to the much earlier figure of St. Clovis

CHRONOLOGY

The sole source for the early Frankish period is Gregory of Tours, who wrote around the year 590. His chronology for the reign of Clovis is almost certainly fabricated, often contradicting itself and other sources. Gregory often divides Clovis' life in spans of 5 years: he became king at age 15, defeated Syagrius in the 5th year of his reign, defeated the Alamanni in his 15th year, defeated the Visigoths in his 25th year, and died at the age of 45, in the 5th year after his victory at Vouillé, having reigned 30 years. The exact date on which Clovis became "king of all Franks" is not known, but it happened sometime after the Battle of Vouillé, which is securely dated to 507. After this battle, Clovis made Paris his capital, converted to Catholicism, and orchestrated the murders of Frankish kings Sigobert and Ragnachar, uniting all Franks under his rule. Clovis' baptism, traditionally dated to December 496 on the account of Gregory, is now believed to have taken place in December 508 according to Clovis' correspondence with the then Bishop of Vienne, Avitus of Vienne, which also indicates that he leaned toward Arianism before converting to Catholicism rather than paganism. The election of Paris as capital must have also happened around 508. Given that the hostilities between Ragnachar and Clovis began after his conversion, it can be inferred that their confrontation took place shortly after, in 509.

Clovis I is traditionally said to have died on 27 November 511. The day is found in one medieval calendar and two missals now in the Library of the Abbey of Saint Genevieve (which was founded by Clovis). However, two obituaries in the abbeys of Saint Genevieve and Saint Denis date his death to 29 November and 3 January, respectively. The latter date may be a confusion with the feast of Genevieve, which also falls on 3 January. Gregory of Tours states that Clovis died on the fifth year after the Battle of Vouillé, which gives 511 using inclusive counting. However, he also states that he died on the 11th year of the episcopate of Licinius of Tours (AD 518) and on the 112th year after the death of Martin of Tours (AD 508). The *Liber Pontificalis* records that Clovis' crown was sent to Pope Hormisdas (r. 514–523), which could imply a later date. Clovis is last attested in an official document dated to 11 July 511, on the First Council of Orléans, and it is generally accepted that he died shortly after.

Clovis I at the Battle of Tolbiac